

## Report of the Round table 2

# Sudan's people yearn for peace and justice

This round table discussion with Sudanese diaspora and Austrian stakeholders took place on the morning of 25<sup>th</sup> October 2024, as part of the “Sudan reconstruction” conference at Bruno Kreisky Forum (BKF), Vienna. The event was organized by Mendy for Peace Culture and Diversity Management, the Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation (VIDC) and the Bruno Kreisky Forum. The Sudanese diaspora network first met in Germany in 2023.

**Georg Lennkh, former director of the Austrian Development Cooperation**, chaired the second-round table. He sensed that there was a disappointment how mediation had failed and the lack of attention this crisis had been getting from the international community.

Creating context for this part of the round table discussion, he painted a picture of the political and security framework of Europe after World War II, specifically the Cold War between the Soviet Union and United States of America. In the onsetting decolonisation, African countries gaining independence had to decide on which “side” of the East—West divide they were. Democracy was not much of a consideration until 1989. But with the collapse of the Soviet empire, the West began to expect democracy in and from Africa and linked this expectation with development aid. Conditionality was born. On the security side, now freed of any Soviet threat, the EU stated that now, “African Problems require African Solutions” for which the increasingly inefficient OAU was ill prepared.

But the founding of the African Union and the AUC, in 2002, fashioned after the EU Commission, breathed new life into the EU-AU relations. The Africa-Europe Joint Strategy Document in 2007 was hailed by the partners as a high point for these relations and a start for a new dialogue and effective cooperation. But this did not meet the expectations and led three summits and 7 years later to disappointment on both sides. The Wars in Ukraine and the Middle East led to the further deterioration of African-EU relations and a shift in the World Order. The Global South started to challenge the Global North and from the EU's perspective, their concern is how Russia (a founding member of the BRIC alliance) tries to turn the Global South into in a Russia support club.

**Moritz Ehrmann, the director of the Austrian Centre for Peace (ACP)**, said that Sudan is one of the focus areas. ACP is engaged in peace processes to try and support the fields of negotiation and facilitation, including to the situation in Darfur. He provides a disclaimer about being a white man, especially when talking about possibilities and limitations, when doing mediation-related approaches, and that his perspective is more of an outsider. Another question he referred are the root causes such as the relationship between religion and the state, and diversity in Sudan. The main goal may be to ceasefire and end all humanitarian crises, but it is important to think about “what should happen right after the war.” “How should it look like? How should it not look like?” Power sharing arrangements like in the past do not lead to a straight way forward. One issue that led to the war is the security sector. “What should happen with the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces?” Moritz Ehrmann asked.

The words “Peace” and “Justice” can create a dilemma as within a war, there will always be violations. What does justice look like? What are the incentives to lay down arms? With emergent actors in international peace-building, how different are the ideas of peace and justice? When punitive justice is considered, the two belligerent sides may continue fighting forever, so a restorative justice might be better. Saudi Arabia and the United States are talking but they are on hold as the envoy for the USA will be replaced. There are processes within the African Union to facilitate a third actor or to establish a civil actor that can remain after the war.

**Gerald Heinzl, a peace researcher at the Austrian Defence Academy at the Ministry of Defence**, said that the revolution of the Sudanese people was “stolen” two times. After the discussion with Suliman Baldo, he noticed that different wars are happening in Sudan at the same. There are inter-communal and intra-communal wars, local and national wars, as well as identity, economic, and political wars. He believes that there is one Sudan but many different identities. Looking to French philosopher Jacques Rancière he introduced the idea of “De-Identify and Re-Identify.” Peace negotiations are difficult. The conflict should be solved by the Sudanese people with some support, but it should not be imposed.

From the European perspective, it is the possibility of a Russian Base in Port Sudan, allowing them control of the Suez Canal and cutting off economic lifelines. Another issue is migration, which was discussed as a social question until 2015, that then became a security question.

**Suliman Baldo, director of the Sudan Policy Tracker**, considered the platforms for mediation and asked, “what do we want to happen in mediation, as civilians, as stakeholders in the political actor’s scene, what are our demands.” He emphasised that the voices of the civilians are not present when shaping the process. The Jeddah process has shortcomings. There was no strategy for humanitarian facilities. It did not answer what happens after the ceasefire, how do we monitor the actions of the process, and what happens in the case of a ceasefire collapse. He adds that civilians engaged when it comes to mass fleeing, but their role in political negotiations is not considered. The idea is to move from humanitarian facilities succession to political negotiations in the framework of the peace process, such as how to solve the root causes, how you do address the actors in the negotiations. The Geneva initiatives have not come to that point and instead were focusing on getting the army (SAF) to the table. But RSF head Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as “Hemedti,” declared last month that he was no longer interested in the negotiations.

**Mariam Wagialla, a researcher in the field of spatial planning**, began her presentation with the statement that “peace-building is a process.” She outlined three key steps: First, it begins with a permanent ceasefire. Second, the people must agree on what kind of future they want for Sudan. The third step is transforming these ideas into actions, based on the slogan of the 2018 revolution: “Freedom, Peace, and Justice.”

Her research project, titled “Strategic Planning Framework for Equitable and Sustainable Special Development in Post-War Sudan,” was initiated by her association, Dania for Diversity and Sustainable Development. The project is hosted by the Technical University of Vienna in cooperation with Tshwane University of Technology in South Africa, as well as researchers from universities in Sudan. Wagialla presented photographs depicting the destruction caused by the war, particularly the loss of property, livelihoods, and the displacement of millions of people. She emphasized that rebuilding Sudan after the war must be implemented in an equitable and sustainable manner. “The people of Sudan will not enjoy peace unless everyone—regardless of race, gender, age, socio-

economic background, or cultural identity—has equal rights and opportunities," she stated. A key part of the plan involves coordinating resources to enable sustainable transformation at the local, regional, and national levels. The focus is on addressing the needs of the people, using the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda as references. The approach is inclusive, with an emphasis on creating digital tools to foster community-building and enhance the problem-solving capacity of the Sudanese diaspora.

An interdisciplinary approach forms the foundation of her work, incorporating biodiversity, governance, and cultural heritage to develop innovative ideas for the future of Sudan.

Finally, **Mai Ali Shatta, trainer at a centre for non-violent action (Kurve Wutrow, D)**, recalled how the Sudanese diaspora network began in 2023. She reached out to many organizations for support but was unable to receive any. Either they did not respond, or they stated that they lacked the capacity to help. Frustrated by these experiences, she shifted her focus to the diaspora, creating initiatives that allowed people to understand her pain. One such initiative was the film *Forgotten Voices*, while another was the creation of safe spaces for people to share their stories. These spaces included workshops designed to help individuals process their trauma and begin their healing journeys. The workshops also aimed to unite people with differing views and experiences.

Non-violence became a key approach within the diaspora and for those outside the community, with a special emphasis on bringing together artists and musicians. The platform she created is open to non-violence and peace and has gained attention from several EU countries. In 2023, the first networking workshop was organised in Germany, followed by online meetings and today's gathering in Vienna. Amira Osman also contributed by amplifying the voices of civilians, alongside international solidarity from the UK and the US.

#### **Key points of discussion:**

- African problems, African solutions? One debate started that diaspora should be open minded and listen to all different perspectives and pay attention to how outsiders see the conflict. However, others did not agree, saying that Sudan should not wait for outsiders to solve their problems, and that Sudanese people are familiar with the issues of Sudan.
- One participant comment on the language people are using when discussing the conflict: "This is our problem, the language we use leaves us with no space to learn from our mistakes."
- Women, youth, and marginalised groups: The question regarding feminist policies and peace was raised: "Why women are invited for the negotiations." Furthermore, "70-80% are under the age of 30 years young. The youth have already voiced their demands, but how we can bring it into action." Agreements are related to those of the elite and does not consider the voices of the people, which poses a large problem relating to the living conditions of the people. An example being the difference in living between the nomadic groups and the rural areas.
- Diaspora has an impact in this war with organising, structuring, and looking into what Sudan should look like after the war. Furthermore, it is not enough to involve people who want peace but include all the others as well belonging to other (belligerent) parties." Another participant underlined this point: "We must sit together with our enemies. It is a difficult, but necessary process."

- Impact of colonialism: Before colonial time, Sudanese people were ruled through traditional means of governance. Colonialism forced the people onto a track of modernism where they lost for example their land rights. The new governance system was authoritarian, colonial based or dictatorship. It created a class of educated elites who have no connection to the people of Sudan. The modern Sudan established from outsiders.
- (European) values and interests: Europe tends to mask their interests as values. The EU should be more transparent what are their interests and how partners can align with it. But it should act accordingly to their values.

**For closing remarks, Georg Lennkh** emphasized the importance of reconstruction—not just physical infrastructure, but also addressing the social, medical, and emotional damages, as well as the political and psychological aspects. The round tables were followed by internal workshops for Sudanese conference participants at the Bruno Kreisky Forum.

Report: Hanin Eisa  
Editing: Franz Schmidjell  
Vienna, Nov 2, 2024